

A LOOK BACK

EASTER ISLAND OR RAPA NUI
by Reverend Father Hippolyte Roussel
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Missionary on Easter Island from 1866 to 1873

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Translated by Ann M. Altman

Reverend Father Hippolyte Roussel of the Sacred Hearts of Picpus, to whom we owe most of the credit for converting the natives of Rapa Nui to Christianity between 1866 and 1873, left some notes about this strange land in the Pacific that deserve to be published. These notes, made in 1869, are a precious contribution to historic studies and they are the fruits of his observations and research into the details of the lives of the natives which were characterized, alas, not only by the savage brutality of man's worst instincts but also by the unique and incoherent nature of their customs [Father Idelfonse Alazard, SS-CC],

THE PEOPLE, THE RULING DYNASTY AND THE PRESTIGE OF ROYALTY

The people who live on Rapa Nui are generally small but they can be distinguished from other Pacific islanders by their pale complexions, the regularity of their features, and the sweet and kind expressions on their faces. There are, however, some exceptions to this rule. Members of the older generation, who are much more robust than the younger islanders, think that they might be adding something of value to their demeanor by rolling their eyes and covering themselves with those indispensable tattoos. The end result tends to obscure the kind and conciliatory features with which nature has endowed them.

The present generation has preserved the original features of the islanders to a greater extent because its members, growing decadent, have failed to maintain the line of tattoo artists. By contrast, the present-day islanders attempt, using all the means at their disposal, to beautify themselves artificially with different colors that they moisten in their hands with saliva.

When I set foot on Rapa Nui and saw its small but noisy population, all painted the color of blood with harpoons or rusty sabers in their hands I would have been afraid, just as other travelers have been if I had not been prepared for all eventualities and if I had not been forewarned by one of the natives who had taken it upon himself to be my guardian from the moment I arrived. I was surrounded by a crowd that pressed up against me from all sides and it seemed prudent to follow his advice and climb up onto a large chiseled stone that was on the shore. I was safe there and from there I blessed the land and began to speak to my audience who, without exception, wanted nothing more

than to take from me every last thing that I possessed.

Their toilette, as is the case everywhere, required a certain amount of effort because the mud that they plastered on themselves dried in the sun's rays and as a result of the warmth of their bodies and had to be reapplied daily or even several times a day. We fought against the savage customs for a long time without success but now Christianity has put an end to them and one can make them blush by reminding them that they used to slather themselves with red mud. They will add, sweetly, that they only did it to frighten foreigners since they do not want to admit that it had been an example of poor taste.

I shall leave it to the experts to discuss the cradle of Rapa Nui culture. It is clear, however, that the Rapanui belong to the Polynesian family, as indicated by their traditions, their customs, their tapus, their religion and their language, which are almost indistinguishable from those of the people of the Gambier Archipelago. The common traditions have resulted in the fact that Easter Island has never had a name in Maori that distinguishes it, in particular, from other islands in the Pacific. The name "Rapa Nui" is unknown to the natives. This designation of their homeland was introduced by foreigners or, more likely, by the natives of neighboring islands that would have landed here on whaling ships. No matter whom I asked and how many times, asking over and over again to confirm the truth of their assertions, they always answered, "We don't know the name Rapa Nui - our land has never had its own name - we only know Hanga Roa, Vaïhu, Otuiti, etc., etc....." Everything except the island has its own name and that extends as far as a particular hut, cliff or rock face and includes every little piece of land or paved area - that is where names such as Mateveri [sic], Hanga-pika [sic] and Hapina come from.

According to the natives, the island was deserted when two great ships, without masts, with the prow raised like a duck's neck and the poop raised similarly but split into two halves, sailed along the Southwest coast until they came to a bay, in the North, called Anakena. Each of these boats held about one hundred people. This poor small bay with its beach of white sand seemed a good place to land according to Hotu, the captain of this small fleet, and his wife, Avareipua. He ordered the two boats to be pulled up onto the beach and then men, women and children disembarked with all their belongings, which included pigs¹, chickens, taro, sweet potato, a tropical vine *igname* (yams), bananas, *toromiro*², *ngaoho*³, *maute*⁴, sugar cane, etc. There are two little plants on the island that could not have been imported, namely, *marikuru* and *naunau*⁵. They barely grow at all on the island except in cracks in the rocks. I asked the islanders, to test them, if these bushes had also been brought by the original settlers. "No", they all answered, with one voice, "they are local plants, from Rapa Nui. You see the goats and the pumpkins? Well, they were also not brought by our ancestors. They were gifts from the ships that came from Callao"⁶.

After a short rest at Anakena, the new colonizers spread out over the island and settled, some on one promontory and some on another. Then, immediately, they set to work cultivating the plants from across the water. Hotu, who was the king and who settled at Anakena, wasted no time before abdicating in favor of his son Taumééké. The king used to abdicate when his son got married but this event did not occur for a long time

since the customs of the country did not allow the son to get married until he had reached quite an advanced age.

Taumééké was succeeded by Vakai, who was succeeded by Marama, who was succeeded, in turn, by Raà, Mitiake, Otuiti, Tunkura, Miru, Ataraga, Tuu, Ihu, Haumoana, Tupaariki, Mataïvi, Terahai, Kaimokohi, Gahara, Tepito, and his son Grégorio, the last offspring of the royal family, who was an intelligent child and died when he was about twelve years old, mourned as much by the missionaries as by his subjects. The entire line spanned twenty-two generations.

From Hotu to the last king, who had been taken away with two of his sons and his two daughters on Peruvian ships, there had been an uninterrupted succession of great chiefs or kings. These kings, who were regarded as gods, exercised absolute power over the island and used their authority to retain the prestige associated with the gift of apparently superhuman powers, as well as certain personal privileges. To the kings alone belonged the first fruits of the land. These offerings were brought to them with great ceremony. I was there when the natives brought the first vines (yams) of the year to Grégorio at his home. A procession was headed by people carrying the vines, followed by numerous natives and boys in two lines, each holding a peeled branch of *hau* that had been painted black. The procession resembled nothing more than a funeral procession with flaming torches. From time to time, the air resounded with howling and incomprehensible singing.

Only the kings had the right to begin the harvest, which remained taboo until they wanted to begin. Woe unto anyone who dared to violate the taboo. Often, such an act would cost him the destruction of his property and sometimes, even, the loss of his life.

The king's head was taboo. The king had to let his hair grow, without ever touching it with a stone blade. I recall quite clearly how, when I arrived on Easter Island, Grégorio was presented to me as the one and only true chief and how he was the only one to have long hair. When, for reasons of hygiene, I asked one of the Mangarevans who had accompanied me to cut his hair, the child put up considerable resistance and gave in only as a result of force or fear. The general feeling of discontent was so apparent that it would not have taken much for them to start hurling stones at the barber once his work was complete.

The kings' hands were also taboo – they were allowed only, under the guise of recreation, to make fishing lines and nets. They were allowed to fish from a canoe but their homes, their lands, their food and their entire persons and everything that they used were taboo for people of both sexes.

I did not see any evidence of classes on Rapa Nui other than the kings (*ariki*), the priests (*ivi atua*), the warriors (*matatoa*) and the farmers (*kio*). In recent times, even though the kings were still viewed with respect by the common people, who considered them to be something sacred, their authority was, nonetheless, either absent or totally unrecognized: it had passed completely into the hands of the *matatoa*, who decided everything and fought among themselves without prior consultations with His Majesty. There was absolutely no thought of just cause in their declarations of war. Personal vengeance, jealousy, covetousness and hunger were the usual motives. In these conflicts, the king or chief had nothing to fear in terms of insult from either party; they could stay at home without anyone even

thinking of bothering them. Nonetheless, either from fear or out of prudence, some of them temporarily abandoned their domestic hearth to remove themselves from the theater of war: from there they might leave to spend some time in Hanga Roa, Anakena or Atuiti.

WAR

Once war had been declared, all those who were going to take part smeared themselves with black dirt and spent the night without sleeping. They busied themselves with preparing their weapons and hiding their valuables. There were certainly no human sacrifices or other offerings in honor of the divinity to ensure his protection. It seems that the idea of a religious cult disappeared with the last priests and priestesses, who died a long time ago.

Before daybreak, the warriors set off on foot, accompanied by their wives and children, who followed behind them, singing protective chants and wailing. The women and children settled themselves on the high ground closest to the battlefield so that they could watch the victory or the defeat of their husbands or their fathers.

When they heard that a war party had set out, the opposing parties, if they felt that they had the strength to resist the marauders, tried to ambush them on their way to battle, waiting to a chance to gain the upper hand. If, by contrast, they felt that they did not have the strength to resist, they stayed put and simply surrendered to the victors, who would then immediately start to destroy their property and burn their homes. Everything was consumed by fire: homes, sugar cane etc., and once everything had been burned or pillaged, the defeated men, women and children were driven, without any chance to organize themselves, to a place that had been designated in advance.

It goes without saying that personal feuds were also resolved, and being beaten with a club was the least of it. There were people who were buried alive and then burned in an oven after they had suffocated. Others were cut up with an ax, kicked until their entrails fell out; others were burned over a small fire until they expired. All possible savage inventions were exploited to punish defenseless victims of all ages, both sexes, and all stations in life.

After a day of vengeance, the defeated islanders were kept, under guard, in caves and they were only allowed out to work – all were now slaves and all had to plant a certain piece of land for their respective masters. When these little masters no longer needed their services, they sent them back to their homes under some pretext or other but, in reality, so that there would be fewer mouths to feed and, especially, to force them to plant all their own crops once again. If the slave, sent back to his home, forgot the lesson that he had been taught so often and was foolish enough to replant, on his own land, enough for his family, he could expect to see himself robbed again at the first possible chance, when all resistance would again be futile and would be met with a return to slavery or another war. So what did the defeated islanders do? They contented themselves with just planting one twentieth of what they would have needed to live in relative ease, preferring to die of hunger than to plant for someone else.

The consequences of such continuous privations were

tragic for the population and provided fertile ground for an incurable disease⁷, which will eventually, if it continues, destroy Rapa Nui.

So that is how things stood when the missionary arrived⁸. Thanks to the Religion, exercising his influence over the natives, he was able to put an end to these raiding parties. Everyone was content and happy; nobody wanted to see a return to the past except, perhaps, one person and this single individual, alone among the islanders (the hidden enemy and the chief of the islanders! The one who boasted of having killed two islanders!) This proud and brainless man Torometi – who would have believed it! – actually tried to reestablish the old habits among a population of Christians and to make himself the Chief of the Robbers. We would like to believe that the few settlers who find themselves here, far from giving him their confidence, should see that it is in their best interests to stop him.

Initially, the natives used the following weapons: the *hau*⁹, a type of long club; a short heavy club; and a piece of a dried gourd attached to the end of a long *hau* branch. Later on, a man called Eta, returning from his field of sweet potatoes, banged his foot hard against a *mata*¹⁰ (a piece of very sharp stone). He hurt himself so badly that he conceived of the “wonderful” idea of replacing the piece of calabash by a *mata*. He used this new lance to great advantage and all the warriors followed his example. The natives also used axes, harpoons, and any other sharp implement that they had been able to obtain by barter from passing ships. As a last resort, they would even throw stones.

POPULATION

Nothing is known for certain about the size of the early population of Rapa Nui. The intelligence of the natives and their memories are insufficient to allow any estimate of such numbers. Nonetheless, they all agree that long ago, before smallpox and before they had been taken away on Peruvian ships, there were very many of them and that the number of women and girls exceeded the number of men and boys, while quite the opposite is true today. And one should not be in too much of a hurry to accuse them of lies and exaggeration in the latter case because I notice regularly that of any three deaths, two are always of females, which might explain the disproportionate number of males.

I have trouble believing that the population was as high as five or six thousand, as some of the natives insist. The interior of the island has never been settled¹¹ as can be recognized from the absence of paved areas and of any signs of *maute* and *toromiro*, which provide clear evidence of ancient habitation. Only the shore was inhabited and the clusters of *maute*, *toromiro* and *hau* that are scattered about suggest a population of no more than five thousand souls with an average of five or six people per hut. According to the recent censuses, the population would have been reduced to 650 people.

What was the cause of this great diminution in numbers, I cannot think of any apart from, as I noted above, their general state of privation, the dampness of their huts, the unhealthy winter air, their immorality and the gross imprudence of cohabiting with those who are sick. To threaten them with certain death in the latter case is a wasted effort. They do not cling to life and

they are not afraid of death, without having any real desire for their own deaths. As long as they remain hopeful of saving a sick person they continue to provide a certain level of care. If the illness gets worse, they abandon the invalid and pay no further attention to his requests and his wants.

In fact, scrofulas¹² are the only illnesses on Rapa Nui but they seem to me to be very different from those in Europe. There are also a few cases of dysentery but they are so rare that there is no need to worry about it. I have seen two cases of tetanus, which were lethal, and one case of apoplexy and one of congestion of the brain. The case of the apoplexy involved a young man who was found dead on the shore. The case of congestion of the brain involved a man of about twenty who died after three days.

That is what I have witnessed during my three years on Rapa Nui¹³. I know of only one idiot (a little boy) and I have only met one blind man. Madmen, that is to say, people who are really crazy, are unknown on the island. I say “really crazy” because in the olden days a certain number of individuals would act as if they were madmen or were possessed – perhaps they really were or perhaps they were just pretending in order to steal food more easily from other people.

GOVERNMENT

It would be a contradiction in terms to call the perpetual thievery a form of government. I will not repeat what has been said before, that the Great Chief stayed out of the affairs of the islanders and that luck alone, the discovery of a few eggs of a seabird, was all that was needed to transfer the chief's authority to the happy nest-robbers who then took the name of *matatua* (warrior). In any case, the investiture of chiefly authority only began when the candidate's head had been shaved. The Chief's role was limited to marauding day and night and to spending his year in power tricking as many people as possible and having continuous parties of the most immature and licentious kind.

CUSTOMS

One custom that has been handed down to the present day is that any tuna fish caught by a fisherman should be given to the chief or, if not to him, to the *matatua*. Another custom is that plantations, held in common by the members of a single family or located on the same piece of land and defined only by a few stones placed at regular intervals, should be cultivated synchronously and then the first fruits should be taken to the Chief. When the crop is perfectly ripe, no matter what it is, the plantation in which it is growing becomes the focus of festivities for the village and, sometimes, for several villages, depending on the size of the plantation and the importance of the person who is considered to be its owner.

For these festivities, the natives gather as much food as they can, with chickens making the greatest contribution. That is when the *matatua*, leaving their caves on the Mataveri mountain (Rano Kau), would fight like vultures for everything that took their fancy, without anyone else daring to ask too loudly for his share. The same thing would happen when someone died or upon the birth of a child, but with more or less ceremony depending on whether the newborn was a boy or a girl. A boy is

considered far more precious than a girl – girls count for almost nothing. It is rare that such festivities take place without problems because the *matatoa* themselves, being jealous of one another, start trying to rob each other after they have robbed all the guests.

It was the Rapanui custom for the hero of the festivities to remain to one side and not to touch any of the food that was to be eaten. Fortunately for him, when night came and everyone had disappeared, he could bring out of hiding everything that he had taken care to put aside. Once the festivities have finished, the leftovers are eaten by the *kio* (domestic servants) and the plantation can once again, by right, serve the needs of the family that owns it.

The sea adjacent to a piece of land belonged to the owner of the land. Only he, if he wished to, had the right to fish there, to look for octopus and edible mollusks. To claim this right, all he had to do was make his *rahui*¹⁴, which consisted of three stones, one on top of the other, aligned along the stretch of land beside the sea that he wished to reserve for himself.

The customs of the island had defined the work of the men and that of the women. Young girls lived a life of shameful leisure until they were married. The exclusive occupation of the men, both old and young, was the planting and tending of their plantations until the crops reached full maturity; to fish (in the case of men of property), to make fishing nets, and to build huts. The young men rented themselves out, with an average salary of one or two rats and a few sweet potatoes.

Beyond that, everything was women's work. Each woman had to make sure she had sweet potatoes and the wood and grasses needed to cook them. And woe unto her if she failed in her housekeeping efforts. Her negligence would often cost her dearly. It was her job to beat the *maute* (papyrus)¹⁵ and to make garments from it. These garments made of *maute* are the most beautiful that I have ever seen; they look like our blankets made of cotton piqué and are very useful in the winter season.

There is no taboo preventing a man and his wife from eating together with children of both sexes but the husband, as the strongest member of the family, always gets the best food. Only a husband who is very attached to his wife and children will allow them an equal portion or, when fish or chicken is served, even allows them his leftovers. There are some husbands who eat separately from the rest of the family.

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

There is no doubt that the concept of ownership of property was accepted on Rapa Nui: the boundary markers and the *ahu* that are scattered all over the place are a testament to this fact. Most recently, however, this concept has become less established and the first person to occupy a piece of land claims it for himself. Each family used to remain simply the master of land that heredity or an enforced or voluntary stay had put into their hands. Nobody paid too much attention, given the vast areas of land that were not cultivated and the absence of anyone who wanted to buy any of the land. The bad behavior of the natives and their displacement, an obvious consequence of their continuous wars, have left questions of ownership of property in an almost inextricable tangle¹⁶. Also, to buy a piece of property it is necessary, I should not say always since there are some ex-

ceptions, to accept the fact that one must buy it from all the individuals who live on it if one does not want to take the risk of swindling a large number of people. Then, add to this problem that of orphaned children, of which there are great numbers, and you will get an idea of what proprietorship is like on Rapa Nui.

MORALS

Cannibalism was practiced for a very long time and only disappeared entirely with the introduction of Catholicism. Under the sweet and charming exterior that I mentioned above, the natives hid their deceitful, violent and sometimes ferocious characters. I cannot count the times that I have seen a man attacking the face or the head of his wife with a knife to kill her or mortally injure her. And who knows how many foreigners have been eaten? I've heard about such incidents at Anakena, in the crater and at Hanga Piko and the natives keep silent about others¹⁷.

When Brother Eugène was robbed and was hit with a stone and almost killed, the women were the first to laugh about it and to make fun of him. We should not think however that someone was trying to kill him. They were extremely skilled at sinking rowboats so that they could capture and eat the rowers. Barely more than a year ago, when a whaling ship was passing Hanga Roa, a sailor asked for news of two of his friends whose boat had been scuttled and who had escaped onto the island. Nobody knew anything about them....? What could have happened to them....?

In everyday arguments, stoning was very much the fashion. Throwing stones in someone's face was considered to be part of an argument to make one's opponent stop talking or to make him give up. Suicide was very common and was achieved by throwing oneself over a precipice into the sea. This morbid custom was so deeply rooted that, in spite of their conversion to Catholicism, a small slight was enough to push some people towards this great misfortune.

The natives were hospitable to their *repahoa* (friends), whether or not they came from the same bay. They were also hospitable to foreigners but always with the goal of getting more than they gave. If someone did not respond to a gift by giving a gift of greater value, the host would make good the deficit by stealing.

The truth was and still is of little importance to the natives, even when the most serious issues are at stake. Resembling sheep, they will all go wherever the first of them has gone. They study the looks and gestures of the most esteemed among them or of the person who, they think, has the greatest influence. If his looks or gestures correspond to a negative or a positive pronouncement, you can be sure that everyone else will be in full agreement, no matter what the truth might be.

It would be madness to look for true affection in the heart of an Easter Islander. They rejoice as much at the death of someone close to them as at his birth. Their expressions of pain are the equivalent of making faces: self-interest alone is their guide and the basis for their actions.

They have a few songs that are accompanied by some rhythmic movements, and they are both very monotonous and very vulgar. They claim to have had a kind of written language, which allowed them to hand down the important facts about their country to posterity. I have seen this writing carved on a

rather long piece of polished wood and it resembles, to a great extent, the hieroglyphics of the ancient Egyptians. In my opinion, I do not think that the natives were able to make much sense out of these characters. When asked to read them, the few natives who claimed to understand these symbols were reduced to telling ridiculous and unintelligible tales¹⁸.

MARRIAGE

Couples entered into marriage without consulting their parents. Their predilection for each other was the only factor. Dissolution of a marriage was a matter of minor importance. The slightest argument or the end of their mutual attraction was enough to break the ties that bound them. The wedding ceremony consisted of setting up a fat conical bundle of *hau* branches. Then the bundle was surrounded with more than enough food to satisfy the guests. The couple presided over and participated in the meal and, when all the food had been eaten, their married status was recognized. Marriage between relatives was abhorred but, not only were bigamy and polygamy considered acceptable, both were also held in high regard. Adopted children were included in the ranks of legitimate children; they received the same care and the same treatment, with the exception of a certain preference for the latter.

RELIGION

The Rapanui have a fair number of gods; the most powerful ones, those who are the source of all the others, are Hiva, Maké-maké and Tivé. The worship of these gods ceased with the disappearance of the priests and priestesses. All that remained were certain taboos, to which nobody seemed to pay much attention. The natives believed in the immortality of the soul. The soul, after death, went to a foreign land where it was happy or unhappy depending on whether its owner had been more or less faithful during his lifetime in the observance of taboos. If the soul was happy, it would be nicely dressed and remain forever in its new country. If, by contrast, it was unhappy and poorly dressed, it would return to its family on the island to torment them.

What were their ideas about souls and spirits? It is unclear. According to the natives, a soul or a spirit was something rather vague, a kind of specter without a head and having only ribs. They seemed to be very afraid of these ghostly souls; they came on many occasions to ask me to chase away, as they said, the bad spirits of a father or a mother, who was tormenting them and tearing at their entrails.

PRIESTS

There used to be both priests and priestesses here. Their functions were rather limited. They presided over the celebrations for a newborn and they chased away the evil spirits from the bodies of the sick. It was also their job to compose and sing songs in honor of the dead.

I have no idea whether they ever participated in human sacrifices. I have only heard the natives speak of offerings on the *ahu*, offerings of chickens, fish, etc.... The *ahu*, or sacred place, was where the natives placed their dead; its taboo was not inviolable as it is everywhere else¹⁹.

STATUES

Everyone who has visited Easter Island has been struck by a certain astonishment²⁰ on seeing the statues there. It is true that they are grotesque, but they are also gigantic and are distributed in large numbers around Rapa Nui. Visitors have wondered where they might have come from. And how did the natives manage to set them up and to transport them over such great distances.

These statues are made of soft stone and are about seven meters high and three meters in diameter. They were all carved out of the exterior face of the Otuiti Crater, at the northern tip of the island²¹. Some have remained in the quarry without having been detached from the rock, as if they had been abandoned before they could be completed. They were carved with a hard stone that was narrower at one end than at the other and was about fifty centimeters long.

It is not known how these statues were transported and erected – only a legend remains. The Great Chief of the time, who was all-powerful like his predecessors, ordered the statues to walk and then all of them, on hearing his words, started move and chose destinations around the island that appealed to them. It is likely that, on festive occasions, all the clans gathered together, each one bringing its household gods²², and dragged the statues with ropes made of *hau* to their respective locations.

I am led to believe that the stone statues were *dragged* and not *rolled* because one never finds a statue that has been broken or abandoned during transit: all arrived safely at their destinations and have smooth backs²³. It is also noteworthy that, the further the statues are from the crater, the smaller they are, and that the biggest ones that are standing today are those that remain at the Otuiti Crater.

Tradition has it that the enormous millstone that rested on each head was put on top of each statue by piling up stones. These hat-like objects, which rest cone-like on the heads of the statues, are about three and one half meters in diameter and they are made of a red stone that comes from a quarry at the other end of the island, at Punapau. The smallest ones were taken away and the largest ones remain high up on the mountain.

CRATERS

Rapa Nui is made of many craters, the three largest of which contain fresh water, namely Ranokau (at Mataverí), Rano Aroi (in the center of the island) and Rano Raraku (at Otuiti) in the extreme north. None of the fresh water in the volcanoes is of any value – only reeds grow there. The volcano at Mataverí is, however, lined with *hau* and *toromiro*, which grow on its inside slopes.

AGRICULTURE

The natives grow sweet potatoes, bananas, yams, sugar cane and taro, but all in such small quantities that, for four months of the year, they are dying of hunger. But, also, one should add that it is not only their laziness but also the poor quality of the land that prevents a good harvest.

The winds here are almost continuous and all the attempts at farming made up to this point by foreigners and ourselves

have been fruitless. Trees lose in winter what they have gained in the summertime. The acacias, for example, grow shoots one year and then the old shoots dry out the year after to make way for new ones. Peach trees flower but none of the flowers leads to fruit because of the violence of the wind. The most progress has been made in raising animals but one must not forget that there is only water inside the craters and that the few pigs that were brought here almost all perished. How will sheep fare? Time will tell but one has already died of an intestinal ailment²⁴.

Father Hippolyte Roussel, SS-CC
Missionary on Easter Island (1869)

Father Alazard adds, "N. B. Easter Island is today annexed to Chile. It is no longer under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Vicar of Tahiti²⁵. Since 1892, the island has been entrusted to the pastoral care of the Archbishop of Santiago, Chile. The last missionary of the Sacred Hearts of Picpus to visit this mysterious island was Reverend Father Isidore Butaye, of the Apostolic Vicariat of Tahiti. He spent eight days there, from January 27 to February 4, 1900. The population had reached 231 inhabitants of whom 213 were natives."

Father Ildefonse Alazard SS-CC

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ There is no evidence that pigs arrived with the settlers. If they started out with them, these animals did not survive the sea voyage.
- ² *Toromiro*: *Sophora toromiro*, a tree now extinct on the island.
- ³ *Ngaoho*: a bush, *caesalpinia bonduc*, used as a medicine; the fibers were used for rope.
- ⁴ *Mahute*: the *broussanetia papirifera* tree; the bark was used to make clothing.
- ⁵ *Naunau*, sandalwood, was, according to tradition, on the island at one time but it disappeared prior to 1880.
- ⁶ La Pérouse left the goats; Callao is a port in Peru.
- ⁷ Tuberculosis
- ⁸ While Father Roussel arrived on Easter Island in 1866, let us not forget that he was preceded by Brother Eugène Eyraud, who landed there for the first time on January 2, 1864, and returned later on March 23, 1866, together with Father Roussel.
- ⁹ *Ua* or *paoa* are names of clubs. *Hau* was used to make rope.
- ¹⁰ *Mata'a* is a stone spear point.
- ¹¹ Roussel is in error; the interior was settled, but sparsely.
- ¹² Tuberculosis of the lymphatic glands.
- ¹³ The Reverend Father Roussel arrived on Easter Island on March 23, 1866. Thus, it was in 1869 that he prepared this manuscript which was sent to Valparaíso, where it remained until 1914. We owe our access to this manuscript to the kindness of Reverend Father Félix Jaffuel, the Provincial of South America.
- ¹⁴ To declare a *rahui* on a thing or a place was render it tabu, forbidden.
- ¹⁵ *Mahute* is not made from reeds, but from the *broussanetia papirifera* tree.
- ¹⁶ Also, land that belonged to those who were kidnapped by slavers and taken to Peru was up for grabs and ownership was disputed by the survivors.
- ¹⁷ There are no documented instances of any foreigners being eaten.
- ¹⁸ (Roussel footnote) The wise men who were able to read and write *rongorongo* had disappeared by the time the missionaries arrived, having been carried off by slave traders. A single one of their pupils, Métoro, made it back to Tahiti, where Monsignor Jaussen

heard directly from him the meaning of the hieroglyphics and songs that were written on the few tablets that were saved from destruction. Monsignor Jaussen has written a paper on this extremely interesting question. It was published after his death under the title, *Easter Island. History, Writing and the Repertoire of Signs on the Tablets or Intelligent Hibiscus Wood*, 32 pages, Le Roux, Paris, 1893.

- ¹⁹ (Roussel footnote) Mrs. Scoresby Routledge published, in 1919, a splendid volume, *The Mystery of the Easter Island*, which is really, we have to say, the last word in terms of the ethnography of this mysterious island. Among the numerous engravings that illustrate the text, there are many *ahu* with reconstructions of displays of the dead. All the curiosities of Rapa Nui are, moreover, broadly represented, as well as the various sites on this little island. There are two engravings that we found particularly moving: one shows the village of Hanga Roa with its chapel, and the other shows a group of natives in front of the very door of the church. Alas, they have no priest to instruct them and to administer the sacraments. It was only very rarely that the island received a visit from an almoner of the Chilean Navy and he did not speak their language.

²⁰ French understatement?

²¹ The quarry, Rano Raraku, is at the east end of the island, close to the south coast.

²² (Roussel footnote) We should not interpret the phrase "household gods" to mean that these statuettes were actual idols. To date, nobody has been able to prove that they were ever the focus of a religious cult and thus remain full of mystery for ethnographers. In addition to the giant stone statues, the Rapanui also had wooden statuettes, carved in greater detail. The ribs and backbones were exaggerated and faces carved in a grimace. These were shown off at festive gatherings, together with other curiosities sculpted by their artists.

²³ I suspect that the reason these two words are in italics is that they were inadvertently transposed. The text would make more sense if the author said that he believed that the statues were rolled rather than dragged, if "rolled" were interpreted as "moved on rollers".

²⁴ The sheep did, eventually, become acclimated and they made up the major agricultural production of the country by 1926.

²⁵ An Apostolic Vicar is a special delegate, sent from Rome, in lieu of a Bishop.

REVIEWS

"EARTH ISLAND"... TEN YEARS LATER

A comparative review of *The Enigmas of Easter Island* by John Flenley & Paul Bahn (Oxford University Press, 2002); 256 pp., ill., 16 color plates (\$21.00).

Review by Shawn McLaughlin

AT FIRST GLANCE, Flenley and Bahn's *Enigmas of Easter Island* appears to be a new book on our favorite subject. But don't be fooled. It's *Easter Island Earth Island* with a new title and some significant updates. Why there's no explanation for the title change (and a reversal of author credit) is one of the enigmas here, but that doesn't diminish the usefulness of this "new and improved" (well, "improved", anyway) volume. Since Frank Bock wrote a cogent review of the 1992 edition of this book [*RNJ* Vol.6(2):41, June 1992], my job here will be easier, as I'm going to focus on what's different about this edition, published